

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

### THROUGH LEPC COMMUNITY OUTREACH INITIATIVES

Remember the old saying, “if it’s worth doing, it’s worth doing right”? Well, Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPC) are not only doing it right, many are also “making a difference” in their communities.

#### CHELSEA, MASSACHUSETTS

Allan Alpert, Director of Civil Defense Emergency Management for the City of Chelsea, Massachusetts, reports success in an educational experiment in which a beginning Government Information Systems (GIS) class teamed up with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Chelsea Local Emergency Planning Committee (CLEPC) to help the community meet federally mandated guidelines for emergency preparedness and response capabilities. Based on the benefits to all involved, the project –the first of its kind in the country – might well become a model curriculum for integrating GID into secondary education.



In 1996 the City of Chelsea opened three new educational complexes [which included the new Chelsea High School (CHS)] managed by Boston University. An introductory course was offered through the cooperation of a CHS teacher. A Salem State College geography professor, the EPA, Chelsea’s Emergency Management and Fire Departments, the CLEPC and Bell Atlantic. Sixteen CHS students were involved in data collection and entry using Windows 95, ArcView 3.0 CAMEO (Computer Aided Management of Emergency Operations). MARPLOT (Mapping Application for Response and Planning of Local Operational Tasks ) and ALOHA (Areal Locations of Hazardous Atmospheres).

As a result of this teamwork, the CHS students learned how to use computers and emergency and disaster planning procedures and were actively involved in a simulated HazMat response exercise. Since the pilot project ended, several students expressed interest in public safety careers. Director Alpert believes that the training and experience the student received will encourage and empower them to “make a difference” in their future vocations.

## **PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA**

Martha A. Anderson, Chairperson, also reports success from several initiatives which have enabled the Philadelphia Local Emergency Planning Committee (PLEPC) to “make a difference” in an urban environment. Employees from the City of Philadelphia’s Managing Director’s Office, the Office of Emergency Management, and the Fire, Water, Public Health, Police, Licenses & Inspections, Streets and Law Departments and representatives from industry (Inolex Chemical Company, Sun Company Inc, - Philadelphia Refinery, Tanner Industries, E.I. DuPont De Nemours Company, Pennsylvania Motor Truck Association), business (Southeastern Chapter of the American Red Cross, University of Pennsylvania Wharton School Risk Management and Decision Processes Center), government (Veterans’ Administration Medical Center, United States Coast Guard, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the U.S.E.P.A. Region III) and community (Eastwick P.A.C. Councilwoman Anna Verna” office, Clean Water Action, Community/Labor Refinery Tracking Committee) used a teamwork approach to “make a difference” throughout the City.



### **Community Environmental Fairs:**



Following the example of other LEPCs throughout the region, the PLEPC Public Affairs Committee developed a mobile Community Environmental Fair comprised of informational exhibits from several City departments, USEPA and industries. Equipment and materials were purchased and are coordinated by employees of the Office of Emergency Management who deliver them to designated community locations on Fair days. This program has enabled the PLEPC to:

- 1) communicate city-wide by traveling to neighborhoods within the City,
- 2) standardize the materials and messages shared within the communities,
- 3) offer local industries opportunities to sponsor facility tours and provide positive feedback and
- 4) “showcase” community facilities and organizations who “sponsor” the events.

### **Industry Newsletter**

“The Facilitator” newsletter has been developed as one method of communication among the PLEPC and Philadelphia businesses. The PLEPC Facilities Committee collates articles and informative items which are published in a newsletter format distributed to all SARA Title III “covered” facilities in the City. Response to the newsletter has been positive with feedback and offers for articles from readers.

### **“Shelter-In-Place” Video Release:**

Through a cooperative effort with Greater Media Cable Company, the PLEPC Education and Training Committee has developed a 12 minute video on the “why” and “how” of sheltering-in-place when an emergency occurs. The video, being distributed to civic associations, public, libraries, and schools, can be offered at public meetings or in class settings through a “Community Ambassadors” program which assigns a knowledgeable PLEPC member or volunteer to “host “ the presentation and answer questions or concerns.

### **Community Advisory Committees:**

The Sun Company, Inc. – Philadelphia Refinery is “making a difference” in their area of the City with their Community Advisory Panel (CAP). Sun Company hired a facilitator to develop and manage the CAP which is comprised of employees of the refinery and representatives of civic associations active in the South/Southwest region of the City. Monthly dinner meetings provide opportunities for the Refinery Manager to share information about the experiences of the past month and allow time for dialogue among the community and the refinery. The CAP has hosted facility tours, sponsored student interns, and helped with tree plantings and clothes collections. Members are updated quarterly by the PLEPC on emergency planning and response activities. By improving communications and working closely together, the CAP members are making a positive contribution to Philadelphia. For more information contact John McCann, Manager, Public Affairs, Philadelphia Refinery, Sun Co., Inc., 3144 Passyunk Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19145-9940.

### **PLEPC Membership Recognition:**

Another significant initiative of the PLEDC provides positive annual recognition to committee members and City businesses who “make a difference”. The December PLEPC meeting has been designated as an annual recognition event in which awards and plaques are presented to individuals and entities that have made important contributions to the PLEPC Mission and Goals. City officials and media representatives are invited to the gathering which ensures that the PLEPC’s “message gets across”.



The LEPCs from Chelsea, Massachusetts and Philadelphia are real examples of people working together to “make a difference” in their communities.